

Back Again, Back Again: Quiet

Abigail, as the preroll: Hello hello hello! Before we begin today's episode, we have a listener limerick. If you, too, would like a definitely terrible and very silly limerick written for you and read out on the show about an (arguably) pg-13 topic of your choice, you, too, can go to Ko-Fi.com/BackAgainPodcast or click the link in the description to jump directly to the page. This one is for Tapac, about Penguins.

Though stuck on the ground despite wings

They are deft at many great things

They fish quite like pros

And keep lifelong bros

Plus can tap-dance quite cool as they sing

Thank you so so much for your support!! And - onto the episode!

[**FX:** voices chatter in the background. Music begins, a simple repeating pattern, bright and cheery. It is "Nightingales" by Pierce Murphy.]

Abigail, as the intro: Back Again, Back Again, episode five:

Quiet

[**FX:** Music fades out. A click of a cassette tape-style recorder turns on, and the machine begins to whirr underneath the rest of the audio.]

Something I have discovered, after being away for six years and back for one:

It's noisy, in our world. Even when you think there's silence. Even when you think there's peace.

Right now, you're listening to my voice, distorted by time and distance and old equipment. There's the click of my microphone, aforementioned old equipment: a shitty thing rescued from the back corner of an antique store. There's the ambience that you're hearing, now, that's mine, the product of my new environment: cars on the highway or a plane going by. I don't live far from an airport, and I don't live far from a bay, and both are no strangers to passing and landing planes.

Outside of that, there's the sounds of my neighbors above and around me. Their footsteps, their voices, their own lives played out through the thin walls. We live on top of one another, stacked like building blocks, always aware of how much noise we make. We create our own auditory panopticon - you never know who is listening. You are always surrounded by people who could be listening. Then there is your own ambience, dear listeners, your own constant companions of sound that accompany

my voice: perhaps the hum of the fridge, the hiss of the radiator. Perhaps your own neighbors or planes or roommates, the breathing of the people that share your space. The cars that drive by with their music so loud it shakes the walls. The sound of children playing outside.

But there is more than that, too. The things that we cannot stop, their existence and their production out of our control. The things that we do not *hear* so much as *sense*, that we don't ever process. That we don't even know we are knowing until you are in a place without them. The movement of satellites, far above. Radio waves traveling through the air. The plane, not directly above , but at a cruising altitude of twenty thousand feet over your head.

It is never silent here, not even in the middle of the woods. I've tried to find it, that silence: I moved here, and I drove my car to Mt. Saint Helens, two tanks of gas round-trip at inflated west-coast prices, which would have been worth it as I hiked and hiked, gasping in my out-of-shape body until it was midnight and I was mostly lost - I wasn't even supposed to be there after dark that late in the park - but it would have been worth it if only I was far away from any people and all *noise*.

I thought. I thought. But it was not silent. You do not realize how loud they are, all these things humans have made, until you are in a place without them.

Maybe - maybe we had magic, at one point, long ago, and if we were only quiet enough we would be able to hear the trees whisper.

But it is pointless to wonder. Because it will never be silent again.

(Silence)

It's overwhelming. The noise. I would give all the breath in my lungs to know five seconds of peace.

(Silence.)

It was not a rendezvous point we had been aiming towards. It was the rebel's camp. It took another two days to reach, trekking through the woods, tired and dirty and worried for Rhia, because *if I was having this much trouble, how was she? if I was dirty and covered in scratches, was her eye - the place her eye had been - fine? Was it infected?* I hoped it wasn't infected. I didn't know what people did here, when magic didn't knit them whole and leave the pain in its place.

That hike, those long days, were where I first learned about silence - true silence, complete silence.

But everything ends. Even perpetual travel. And after making it through the woods, over a stream, out onto what became the edge of the plains, we came to - the camp.

I do not know what I had expected. Callia had been cryptic at best, confrontational at worst, when I'd eventually realized

that she was not taking us to meet back up with the others, but to make our way back on our own. I don't know why she'd done it - to see if I was trustworthy, to see if I was hiding something, to see if, once faced with hard ground and an empty belly, I would turn tail and run back to the life I'd left - but I didn't.

And so - she brought me home.

[**FX:** The whirr of the cassette machine fades out. "Nightingales" once more fades in, just as cheerfully.]

Abigail, as the outro: Back Again, Back Again is written and produced by me, Abigail Eliza. If you're enjoying the show, please consider leaving a review on your podcast platform of choice or supporting Back Again, Back Again on Patreon at patreon.com/backagainpodcast, where you'll gain access to bloopers, annotated transcripts, episode sneak-peeks, and more! If you'd like to hear more about the show, visit us on Twitter, Instagram, or Tumblr @backagainpodcast or on Tik Tok @abigailelizawrites. Our outro music is Nightingales by Pierce Murphy from the album To Japan, and is licensed under an Attribution License. The song was retrieved from [FreeMusicArchive.org](https://freemusicarchive.org). Visit the description of this episode for

full copyright information and a link to the page. Sound effect attribution, similarly, can be found in the episode description. If you've made it this far, thanks for sticking around. Please remember that this world always tries to make you feel more alone than you truly are. There are people out there that will love you without condition or expectation, and you will find them. The light-soaked days are coming. I promise. You are so, so very loved.

I hope you have a wonderful day.